

The Garden of Everything

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[translated] REMINISCENCE - Chapter 1: “Hope Estheim”

Here is Hope’s first interview, fully translated (no summaries, all line-for-line translations) for your reading enjoyment.
:D

You can find the previous chapter, the prologue, over [here](#).



FFXIII REMINISCENCE -tracer of memories- Chapter 1: “*Hope Estheim*”

“Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me today.” After I closed our discussions with a sincere bow, I drew in a breath of relief. The interview was an enriching experience. My weariness was accompanied by a strong sense of satisfaction.

“No, thank you. I enjoyed talking with you.” Hope Estheim’s handsome features retain their friendly glow. During the interview, he was consistently relaxed. He dealt with me, a stranger, in a very affable manner and even answered my difficult questions with candor.

However, I could tell that he was more than just a well-mannered person. Though his language was always tender, he possessed a keen and clear view on the realities of society. And contrary to his young age, a placid aura of dignity surrounded him and I felt as though he had already experienced many, many years in a world that did not accept any sort of sugar-coated ideals.

My heart beats violently at the thought of meeting such an interesting individual. I wish to ask him my “usual questions” right away. I’m curious to know how he will answer them. “Umm... Do you still have time? If it’s not too much trouble, I would like to ask you a few more questions. They’re not for the interview; they’re for my own purposes.”

“Yes, of course. What would you like to know?”

“Do you remember a ‘different world’?”

This is one of my “usual questions”.

Hope Estheim only narrows his eyes, as if he is trying to assess something. And I considerate it a polite reaction. When I ask these strange questions without warning, I find it natural for people to become perplexed or shocked. Of

course, there are also those who grow angry because I ask such stupid questions.

Hope Estheim is silent. Perhaps he is waiting for a better explanation before he speaks? I resolve to continue my words.

“In other words, do you possess memories of a different life on another world? For example, perhaps you see repeating dreams of events that you do not remember experiencing. Are there words that you cannot forget, even though you have no idea where you heard them from? Are there faces that you recall with fondness, even though you don’t know who they are? Images that silently appear in the back of your mind... Memories of a past life, so to speak.”

“I believe it’s a fascinating concept, but... Are you saying that you possess these unusual memories?”

I have to answer truthfully.

“Yes, I do. There are images that I see in my dreams, over and over again. They are memories not of this world. They can’t be explained.” The mystery I have been chasing for so long. “At first, I thought it was just my imagination, but the memories would never leave my mind. I eventually began to ask other people if they had similar memories of a ‘different world’, and to my surprise, I gathered a large number of witnesses.”

“That’s very diligent. Now, I don’t mean to put a damper on your search, but it’s also possible for these ‘memories’ you gathered to be simple misapprehensions or subconscious desires of the people.”

“That is probably the case for the majority of my interviews. However, as I gathered more witnesses, I uncovered a truth that could not be ignored.”

I retrieve my notebook. Inside, I have recorded the testimonies of hundreds. “When I compared the ‘memories’ of the people, I came across several common points. I found cases where people, who were born and raised in completely different regions, recalled detailed descriptions of the same scenes. In other cases, people would remember sharing the same experiences, even though they were complete strangers to each other. But the most striking similarity was the words. No one could remember what these words meant, but for some reason, the people knew them. For example...”

I opened my notebook and began to read.

“Cocoon. Fal’Cie. Gran Pulse. Bhunivelze.”

A strong light flickered within Hope Estheim’s eyes.

“There is no trace of these people ever meeting each other. Still, many shared similar experiences and explained their memories using identical words. They told me that, long ago, humanity left the ground and lived in the skies. There was a floating land in the heavens known as ‘Cocoon’. Humanity found safety within Cocoon and feared the outside realm. The heavens are paradise, the surface is hell... This story was repeated numerous times to me. Are all of these people, who share the same memories, somehow connected at the heart? Or do you suppose that these are all memories of a life they experienced together in a different world?”

“And that’s why you came to me... You wanted to know if I also possessed memories of Cocoon – of a ‘different world’.”

“Actually, it’s more than that. When I interviewed the people, your name was mentioned many times.”

“My name?”

“For example, ‘Hope led the people and saved us. Hope was the one who supported Cocoon.’ Hundreds of people

recognized their leader as an individual named 'Hope'. This is why I have looked forward to talking with you today. I felt that, if I listened to your story, I would be able to uncover a major key in this mystery."

Hope Estheim closed his eyes and let out a deep sigh. Was he trying to ease his tension? Or perhaps he reached a resolution. After a while, he spoke.

"Tell me about your memories. Please."

I reply quickly. I speak about the dreams I have repeatedly seen since as long as I can remember.

"I was chased out of my hometown and forced onto a train. I tried to escape. I escaped across a frozen lake... But it wasn't cold. Instead of ice, the lake was frozen into crystals. That thing, the fal'Cie, did it. That's all I remember... Occasionally, I also have dreams where I am clenching a microphone and reporting something into a camera. And in one of my interviews, a person recalled seeing me report on television... What do all of these memories mean? What do they have to do with us? I need to know."

"...Alright."

I hadn't noticed that his eyes were now open. They were directed at me.

"I will tell you about my memories... Back then, humanity lived within a floating continent known as 'Cocoon'. I was also born and raised on Cocoon. I was 14 at the time."

The Beginning of a Journey

"Our fate began with the 'Purge'."

It's not a word I haven't heard before. Many other witnesses have recalled this incident with fear and anger.

He continued to explain his story in detail. At the time, humanity huddled themselves within Cocoon, an artificial celestial object in the sky, and lived luxuriously. However, one ill-fated day, the government of Cocoon – the "Sanctum" – ordered the deportation of an entire town. Hundreds were driven to their deaths. This was the incident known as the "Purge".

Hope Estheim was only 14 when misfortune dragged him into the Purge. He was mercilessly tossed into a severe fate. He faced his mother's death and was branded a cursed l'Cie. The government hunted him down. His mind was filled with revenge...

"Now that I can look back on it, I really was sustaining myself with hate. The despair of losing my mother and becoming an l'Cie was too heavy for me. I deceived myself and aimed my anger at the closest target. I blamed my mother's death on Snow and despised him for it. If Light hadn't stopped me and pulled me back, I don't know where I'd be right now."

He proceeded to tell me the names of his friends and the names of the people they met during their escape. Lightning, Snow, Sazh, Vanille, Fang, Serah... Some of the names were familiar; I recall hearing them during my interviews. At the same time, a few of the names were new to me.

"What sort of person was Lightning?"

"...She is a strict, but gentle person. And because she was so kind, she didn't spoil me, but firmly watched over me."

"So she protected and guided you. Was she like a caretaker to you?"

"At first, I only depended on her. I simply thought she was a strong person. But in reality, she was also lost and suffering. The moment I realized this, I knew that I didn't want to only be protected by her. I wanted to protect her

too.”

“You became ‘partners’ that faced the same trials together.”

“Yes. We all came to support each other and we managed to overcome a variety of obstacles.”

“You fought against the gods who reigned over the people: fal’Cie Barthandelus and Orphan.”

“I’m impressed. You’ve done a lot of research. Back then, the people lived unaware of what their leaders truly were.”

“I heard that, later, the truth was made known to the public. It was after you defeated them and saved the world.”

“Saved the world, huh...” He spoke as if he were talking to himself. “We definitely won against the fal’Cie. But looking back now, I can see that it was only the beginning.”

“Do you mean that you continued your journey even after the battle with the fal’Cie?”

“We had no choice but to continue. In a new time, a new battle was beginning.”

“Was it the battle that revolved around the ‘savior’?”

“...Where did you learn of that word?”

“I heard it while I was gathering witnesses of the other world. Many people still remember this word. My guess is that the word was very important in the other world. I can’t stop thinking about it either.”

“But I never once spoke of the ‘savior’. You merely supposed that I knew. The savior didn’t exist during the period when the fal’Cie ruled. But when I mentioned a new battle, you assumed that it referred to the savior’s appearance.”

“That’s right. Did I make the correct assumption?”

“Not exactly, but you came pretty close. The ‘savior’ appeared after many centuries. But before that, there was a long, long battle. The world was threatened with destruction and was largely damaged. This might sound unbelievable, but it was a battle that exceeded time.”

Overcoming Time

I then came to learn of the story that unfurled during the period known as “AF (After the Fall)”. When the fal’Cie reign ended, the safe land of Cocoon became unstable for humanity. The people had no choice but to immigrate and survive on the untamed grounds of Gran Pulse. While fighting with the natural threats of the land, the people managed to carve a functioning civilization within a few hundred years.

The history told by Hope Estheim matched my previous gatherings. An organization known as “the Academy” led the way to humanity’s restoration. A number of witnesses already made me aware of the defining role the Academy held in history, such as the construction of an enormous city. However, Hope’s account seemed to relevantly and sequentially connect all of the reports I had heard so far.

“This is like hearing the unknown history of mankind...”

“It was a trying time, especially for those who were used to living in the safe and closed-off environment of Cocoon.”

“And on top of all that, Lightning had gone missing. It must have been nerve-wrecking for you to lose your support.”

“Well, at the time, our memories were distorted. We believed Lightning had died and was protecting Cocoon as a crystal. However, Serah found the truth. And the moment I heard that Lightning was still alive, I found confidence. I believed I would definitely see her again. All I had to do was push forward until then. My doubts had vanished.”

“Thanks to the strong bond formed between comrades who endured a cruel journey together... Am I right?”

“It’s a little different. For example, Noel and I were born during completely different eras and raised within contrasting societies. Our pasts had nothing in common, but I immediately sympathized with him. It was because he and I shared the same goals. We were both doing what we could for a future where everyone could live in peace.”

“While Serah and Noel plunged into a battle revolving around Caius Ballad and the seeress ‘Yeul’, you led the Academy and prepared for the looming catastrophe. You prepared for the destruction of Cocoon and the damage it would cause to the land below by constructing an artificial Cocoon. This project to save mankind required hundreds of years of work, and you brilliantly directed it to success.”

“That project was only possible due to the combined, tireless efforts of numerous workers over the course of several generations. I merely oversaw the beginning and the end..... That’s right. It all ended. In AF500, Serah and Noel defeated Caius and the New Cocoon was successfully launched into the sky. But that was simply the beginning of an era of destruction.”

“Was it because of the ‘Chaos’? During my interviews, many people spoke of the Chaos and how the invasion filled the world and could not be stopped. It sounds like the Chaos was an enemy that threatened the world.”

“Yes. We fought against the constant threat of the Chaos. And at the final stage of that battle, the story to end ‘that world’ began. The last story of that world... The savior – Lightning’s story.”

For a moment, I was at a loss of words. The savior’s identity – a truth that had weighed on my mind – was suddenly revealed to me, and rather lightly. I managed to control my flustering and asked, “Please, tell me more...”

But Hope Estheim smiled and shook his head. “I can only share up to this point. If you wish to hear the story of the savior, you’ll have to hear it from Light.”

“But I...”

But I’ve come so far. I was so close to grabbing the tail of a mystery I was desperately chasing, only to have it escape at the last second.

“Please. At least tell me where I can find her.”

I tried to be persistent, but he shook his head again.

“You should try and find her on your own. You managed to reach me after tenaciously gathering a variety of interviews. I believe you can meet Light too.”

It seems that I’m being tested.

“Alright, I’ll try to find her. But to be sure, Lightning is definitely in this world, right?”

“I know that all of my comrades are here. I think that if you chase after Light, you will naturally meet her. And when you talk to all of my friends and learn the truth of ‘that world’, please come and see me again. Then, I will tell you everything I know.”

He softly informed me with a smile. But because he seemed so detached, it felt as though he were hiding something. I couldn’t help but ask.

“Surely I must be wrong, but... I have a feeling that you don’t know where Lightning is either. Even though you believe that you will see her again, it hasn’t happened yet.”

“.....Maybe.”

His smile didn't change. However, his eyes seemed to be shadowed with loneliness.

Before we went on our separate ways, Hope Estheim provided me with one clue. It is the location of his former comrade. I want to visit him as soon as possible, but I'll need some rest first.

At the time, it felt like I was departing on a light vacation... I had no idea that I was about to begin a long journey.

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